The violent contenders for American conquest will do well to attend to the dispassionate, serious, & solid remarks of this able advocate for peace: peace before it be too late! peace "before we lose the capacity of enjoying it."

Monthly Review for December 1781, page 460. vol. 65.

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Vol. 65

FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

CONTINUANCE

OF THE

AMERICAN WAR.

[Price 1 s.]

This author endeavours to persuade the inhabitants of Gt Britain of the necessity of terminating the war with America, & even of the necessity of the independence of that country: but his arguments at the same time that they are of too general a nature to afford conviction, seem to be drawn from timidity & despondence, rather than from any deep & accurate investigation of the subject

Critical Review for May 1782, page 66.

BRITISH MUSEUM

FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

CONTINUANCE

OF THE

AMERICAN WAR,

AND THE

NECESSITY OF ITS TERMINATION,

ADDRESSED

TO THE INHABITANTS OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

By a GENTLEMAN of Lincoln's Inn.

CUPIO IN TANTIS REIPUBLICÆ PERICULIS ME NON DISSOLUTUM VIDERI: SED JAM ME IPSUM INERTIÆ NEQUITIÆQUE CONDEMNO.

Cicero in L. Cat.

LONDON:

Printed for T. Payne and Son, at the Mews Gate.

December M,DCC,LXXXI.

The Definitive Treaty of Peace & Friendship, between his Britannic Majesty, & the United States of America, was signed at Paris the 3d of Sept. 1783. Vide Annual Register for 1783 page 339.

FREE THOUGHTS, &c.

LISTEN, my countrymen, to one who presumes to address you with a freedom offensive perhaps to you, but which the times warrant. With the enjoyment you must resign the privileges of prosperity; and, instead of the accustomed acclamations of joy and victory, you must bend your ear to the cries of domestic woe, and the insults of foreign triumph. Such a reverse raises in the minds of Englishmen, a tumultuous conflict of indignation, pity, and despair. One laments your distresses; the authors of them are ar-

raigned by another; a third yields to deſpair; and a fourth endeavours to draw from adverſity its own antidote. Among thoſe of the laſt claſs, does he who now troubles you wiſh to appear. He does not preſume to inſtruct; he only wiſhes you to receive the inſtruction which experience offers: and, conſiſtently with your late aſſociations, to endeavour to terminate a war, which you cannot now expect to ſee conducted with œconomy. While that reſource remained, you did not make peace with America, part of your petitions. But ſince your petitions, by being treated with diſdain, and your aſſociations, by being artfully branded with that obloquy which certainly would and ought to ariſe from their abuſe, have been defeated, and you conſequently have been plunged deeper in ruin and profuſion; an individual may be excuſed, who now reminds you of the neceſſity of ending a war which, without œconomy, cannot

not be ſupported, and which, experience proves, coercive meaſures cannot terminate with ſucceſs. It muſt be acknowledged, your apparent ſuperiority once promiſed a more fortunate iſſue.

At the commencement of the conteſt, the Americans were divided and alone, their forces ill-diſciplined, and their coaſt unprotected: your reſources were flouriſhing; your army was unimpaired in ſtrength, accompliſhed in diſcipline, and animated by renown. But, alas! where do the conſequences of this ſuperiority appear? Have the moſt boaſted of your victories advanced you one ſtep in the conqueſt of America; or, what every friend of Britain muſt more earneſtly deſire, have they produced any overtures of peace, or any treaties of alliance? No; they are to be traced only in the ſufferings of the widow and the orphan, who unite in execrating victo-

ries which have encreaſed the calamities of the war, without ſhortening its duration.

If you could not prevail *then*, what can you expect *now*, now your enemies are experienced in war, and ſupported by a moſt powerful alliance? Now,—you are without allies, without money, *(a)* and aſſailed by all the great powers of Europe. Thus circumſtanced, it is preſumption to expect ſucceſs, and madneſs to aim at conqueſts. Peace, peace ſhould be your purſuit. Inſtantly accede to the independence of America; and thus endeavour to conciliate as friends, thoſe whom you have ſo long and vainly endeavoured to conquer.

(a) Notwithſtanding money has been procured to carry on the war, every one who conſiders the terms on which it has been raiſed, muſt think the nation poor, though a few individuals who fatten on her ſpoils, are rich.

Your

Your reſentment, however violent, or however juſt, ought to be abandoned; its gratification being, in your preſent circumſtances, not only impolitic, but dangerous. Every future effort (like too many of the paſt) muſt inevitably recoil upon yourſelves; and any further attempt to annihilate the independence of America, muſt endanger your own: for the ſame inſidious policy which induced the French to feign an affection for the Americans, will continue to influence their conduct. They will encourage the reſiſtance of America by occaſional aids; but they will not, by that unreſerved aſſiſtance which marks true allies, diminiſh the force they may employ to ſo much greater advantage at the iſſue of the conteſt. The ruin of the competitors is their object. They will trample upon the exhauſted victor as well as the vanquiſhed, and raiſe that long-projected fabric, UNIVERSAL MONARCHY,

NARCHY, on the ruins of America and Great Britain. If you are become ſo regardleſs of the national ſafety and honour, as to look towards this event with indifference, continue the war with America. Exhauſt your force in a fruitleſs project, that your European enemies, who are ready to profit by your folly, may not be diſappointed. Though your enmity cannot regain the affection, recall the allegiance, or annihilate the independence of America, it may encreaſe her dependence on thoſe who you too well know want no acceſſion of power; and, to the diſtreſſes of this kingdom, it may add the reproach of ſacrificing the liberties of Europe to the phantom of American Independence.

If the growing evils and encreaſing calamities of this war admit of any aggravation, it muſt be derived from the extreme miſery and diſtreſs it has al-

the committee of which Mr Pitt was chairman states the expence of the war to the 5th of April 1782 at 70,075,519 and Mr Young (Intro. to Annals of Agriculture, page 39) adds "It is not an exaggeration to suppose, that last year, part of the present, of the winding up of that long account, will make it full 100 millions"

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already occaſioned. The expenditure of above threeſcore millions of money, is a noble baſis for the expenditure of above threeſcore millions more! It will be a wonderful conſolation to the thouſands who have already fallen victims to this prodigality, to have their numbers ſwelled by revolving years of fruitleſs and improvident profuſion. To thoſe who already deplore the loſs of all the bleſſings of peace, and the defection of above a fiftieth part *(b)* of the inhabitants of this commercial country, from the arts of peace and habits of induſtry, it muſt afford peculiar pleaſure to ſee the toilſome ſwain and uſeful mechanic, whether compelled by neceſſity, or al-

(b) "Our armies and navy, in the preſent year (1779) employ in actual ſervice, at leaſt one fiftieth part of all the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland, taken upon the large computation of ten millions."

Eden's Letters to Lord Carliſle, p. 71.

lured

lured by the pomp of war, ſurrender at diſcretion, aſſume the manners and vices of their military aſſociates, and prey upon a ſociety which their happier deſtiny enabled them to ſupport. To thoſe whoſe hereditary averſion to ſtanding armies has been encreaſed by recent occurrences, it muſt give great pleaſure to obſerve the unprecedented augmentation of an eſtabliſhment, in which ſubmiſſion to their officers is deemed a ſtronger obligation than attachment to their king and country, *(c)* and in which, the only ſubſtitute for the latter is a diſcipline their officers may often want both power and inclination to enforce. Ruinous eſtabliſhment! What ſecurity have you

(c) "L'armée mépriſera toujours un ſénat, & reſpectera ſes officiers."
L'Eſprit des Loix, liv. xi. c. 6.

Vide alſo liv. xiii. c. 17, in which Monteſquieu condemns the augmentation of forces in the European ſtates.

for

for your rights, or what enjoyment can you expect in the poſſeſſion of America, threatened on one ſide with the licentious rapacity of a diſbanded, and on the other with the tyranny and diſorder of an overgrown, ſoldiery. Theſe are the ſcourge of conquerors! They repreſs that ambition which they contribute to gratify; and teach him humiliation, whom they have placed in the triumphal car. Were your conqueſts as extenſive as thoſe of Rome, your fate would be ſimilar. Like Rome, ſubdued by thoſe ſhe had employed to ſubdue the world, you would exchange liberty for conqueſt, and happineſs for fame *(d)*.

Seek peace then, before you loſe the capacity of enjoying it. Though your

(d) Vide Mr. Gibbon's account of the Roman veterans, in his Eſſay on the Study of Literature, ſect. 20, page 36.

~~conſtituents~~ representatives are faithleſs, there is a power from which, although it cannot reſtore you to ſplendor, you have a right to expect relief *(e)*. I mean the power of

(e) This may appear a very extraordinary expedient. It is, I confeſs, an uncommon, but by no means an abſurd one. You know that the king (Black. Com. i. 257) can make peace and war uncontrolled by parliament, to whom his miniſters alone are amenable for improper or inglorious conduct in the beginning, conducting, or concluding of a national war. In its original form, this power reſembled the mild authority of a parent, rather than the ſtern prerogative of a king. It held out the olive branch, when peace became the wiſh of the people; and when a public wrong was to be avenged, *cried havoc, and let ſlip the dogs of war*. It was, in ſhort, the echo of their voice, and modulated entirely by their wiſhes. If it is otherwiſe now, puniſh thoſe who are made reſponſible by the conſtitution; if it is not, have recourſe to a power derived from you, and held only for your benefit. This will at leaſt bring it to a ſhort iſſue: for it is juſtly obſerved by a celebrated hiſtorian *, that "the prince "who

* Gibbon's Dec. and Fall of Roman Empire, chap. xxv.

the

the crown, which, being derived from you, ought to be exerciſed only for your benefit *(f)*. Whether you ever were in greater need of its protection, I ſhall not enquire. I ſhall only ſay, that when peace becomes the wiſh and requeſt of

" who refuſes to be the judge, inſtructs his people " to conſider him as the accomplice of his mi- " niſters."

(f) " The power of the legiſlature, in the utmoſt bounds of it, is limited to the public good of the ſociety. It is a power that hath no other end but preſervation, and therefore can never have a right to deſtroy, enſlave, or deſignedly to impoveriſh the ſubjects."

Locke on Government, xi. § 135.

" The legiſlative being only a fiduciary power, to act for certain ends, there remains ſtill in the people a ſupreme power to remove or alter the legiſlative, when they find the legiſlative act contrary to the truſt repoſed in them," &c. xiii. § 149.

You will eaſily diſcover the analogy between this and the executive power.

the ſubject, it ought equally to become the wiſh of the crown. If this wiſh is gratified, you will naturally feel an increaſed attachment to your ſovereign; if it is not, you will at leaſt have the melancholy ſatisfaction of knowing the extent of your danger, and the authors of your diſtreſs.

Your claim (excluſive of that which reſults from the very eſſence of government) to the indulgence and protection of the crown, is known to all Europe; which has ſeen you, in obedience to your ſovereign, but with very little probability of ſucceſs, and ſtill leſs of advantage, make exertions, which a war, the moſt juſt in its origin, the moſt certain and deſirable in its event, could ſcarcely juſtify. Your liberality has known no bounds, and your ſubmiſſion has been cheerful and unparallelled. Exhauſted by ſuch extraordinary liberality and exertions,

ertions, though not at all advanced by either, you are called upon to oppoſe three powers, each more formidable, from its vicinity, ſtrength, and eſtabliſhed reſources, than that with which you have ſo long been unſucceſsfully engaged. Though ready to exert all the power you have left, the change of circumſtances makes it impoſſible for you to continue it in the ſame direction. An inglorious peace you diſdain. You only deſire to throw off incumbrances, that you may with effect purſue your natural intereſts; that is, that you may oppoſe to the alarming combination of European powers, all the force you have left, and regain the empire of the ſea, which you have loſt in viſionary attempts to gain the empire of America.

If you are thwarted in theſe wiſhes, there muſt be ſome unnatural bar between you and your ſovereign. The rays

of

of royalty muſt be ſome how intercepted, and the ſtream of benevolence muſt in ſome manner be turned from its natural courſe. There muſt be near the throne, men, who, preferring their own power to your proſperity, and nobly ſcorning to yield their emoluments to your diſtreſs, labour to involve the k—g in their conſpiracy againſt the peace, happineſs, and freedom of his people. It is not haſtily, that I impute to them ſuch deſigns. They will be but too apparent, when you conſider that the original object of the war has long been abandoned, and that the independence of America, which you attempted to deſtroy after you had diſclaimed every idea of taxation, has been virtually, though not formally, admitted. For what then are you now contending? For an *undefined conqueſt!* O happy expedient, to ruin the nation, and enrich a junto! Oppoſed by *inveterate rebels*, and ſupported only by *timid friends*,

your progreſs in this wild ſcheme will not exceed the wiſhes even of its projectors. Tardy even as they can deſire, will be your progreſs. Gazette will ſucceed Gazette, with the ſlow ſolemnity of funeral pomp; while the rapid ſucceſſion of loans, contracts, &c. &c. is undermining the conſtitution.

If the avowed object of this deſtructive warfare could poſſibly be of advantage to Great Britain, there would be leſs reaſon to impute its continuance to ſordid and ſelf-intereſted motives. But when it is ſuch as to make every unbiaſſed perſon dread the accompliſhment of what miniſters affect ſo ardently to deſire, one is at a loſs whether to aſcribe it more to want of foreſight, or of integrity. To you it is immaterial, whether your calamities are owing to ignorance or deſign: the only difference is, that the authors of them

them will in one caſe be objects of contempt, in the other, objects of deteſtation.

It is but too plain, however, that in the preſent war, the governors and governed purſue different intereſts. The latter, zealous for the honour and independence of Great Britain, dread a conqueſt which muſt annihilate both. The former, miſled by the deſtructive phantom of a ſeparate intereſt, are eager for an acquiſition, in which corruption will expand, and crown influence may be extended. Miniſters know the temper of the Americans too well, not to be appriſed, that if their conqueſt was effected, they would not lay down their diſpoſitions with their arms, and at once renew their former habits of friendſhip and confidence. No; they well know

know that American conqueſts can be retained only by force and corruption *(g)*.

A ſtanding army, the ſpecies of force they would employ, though diſtant from the ſeat of empire, is always a formidable engine, and would be particularly ſo in this inſtance, as by its means that encreaſed influence, which the crown acquires, and perhaps neceſſarily enjoys, during a ſtate of hoſtility, would be perpetuated.

Of corruption, they will adopt the ſame ſpecies in America they have ſo ſucceſsfully practiſed at home. An admirer of the Engliſh conſtitution,

(g) "Quos educere invitos in provinciam non potuit, eos retinere qui potuit?"—Ciceronis Fragmenta, edit. Erneſti, vol. vii. pa. 1041.

foreſeeing this, has juſtly thought the conqueſt of America would be the ruin of Great Britain; and has in particular predicted, that the privilege of granting ſupplies, which has given riſe to that conſtitutional dependence of the crown upon the Houſe of Commons, will be rendered uſeleſs, by the intereſted and corrupt liberality of American aſſemblies; and that of conſequence you will be deprived of the ſecurity which ariſes from the mutual controul of its parts, and the juſt balance of the conſtitution *(b)*. If his

(b) "Nothing could be more fatal to Engliſh liberty (and to American liberty in the iſſue) than the adoption of the idea, cheriſhed by the Americans, of having diſtinct independent aſſemblies of their own, who ſhould treat immediately with the king, and grant him ſubſidies; to the utter annihilation of the power of thoſe ancient, and hitherto

his predictions come to pass, adieu to the boasted constitution of England: that famed fabric will be no more, nor will any vestige remain of a constitution —" in theory the most beautiful of " any, in practice the most approved, " and, it was once hoped, in duration " the most permanent." Black. Com. i. 217.

Feeling for the calamities the American war has already occasioned, convinced of the folly of its continuance, and foreseeing consequences equally alarming, whether it proves unfortunate, or is crowned with success, I must repeat my wish, that those murmurs

therto successful, assertors of general liberty, the British Parliament."

De Lolme on the Constitution of England, chap. iii. note *(d)*.

which it has occaſioned in every corner of the kingdom, may reach the ears of the king. I do not mean you ſhould beſet the throne with clamours. I only wiſh, that by ſuch a proof of your reliance on the gracious diſpoſitions of your ſovereign, you will give him an opportunity of juſtifying your confidence, and of convincing you, his affections are not entirely eſtranged. He has a right to this confidence. His true conſtitutional character entitles him to it. He is not placed at your head, to make you the inſtruments of his power or caprice, but of your own happineſs. If he is raiſed beyond the ſphere of humanity, he has reached an elevation to which the conſtitution never meant he ſhould attain. Even the idea of ſuch a pre-eminence ought not to be admitted. It will deſtroy that confidence which is your mutual

ſupport, and introduce diſtruſt and jealouſy, the invariable fore-runners of commotion, and the ſure ſymptoms of decay. You will haſten the decline of freedom, by preſuming it is gone, and accelerate the advances of that deſpotiſm you wiſh to prevent.

In compaſſion, then, to yourſelves, as well as in juſtice to your ſovereign, believe your natural union ſtill derides the arts of intereſted and deſigning men. Approach the throne with confidence, and you will not leave it without redreſs. Your wiſhes will be proclaimed by the mouth of your ſovereign, and to him you will feel yourſelves indebted for returning peace. Thus, by an artifice not unworthy a free people, you will render that branch of the prerogative the moſt attractive which is the beſt, and

baniſh indirect means of influence, by conferring on the crown all the power, the loyalty, and attachment of a free people can beſtow.

THE END.